



TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
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May 18, 2007
Board of Commissioner's
Meeting Minutes

Commissioner's Present:

Commissioner Blalock (via Phone)
Commissioner Cocke
Commissioner Davis
Commissioner Hakeem
Commissioner Jones (via Phone)
Commissioner Osborne
Commissioner Rogers
Commissioner Starling
Commissioner Walker
Chairman Wiggins

Commissioner's Absent:

Commissioner Garrett
Commissioner Horne
Commissioner Pierce
Commissioner Pride
Commissioner Smith

Staff Present:

Shay Rose, Acting Executive Director
Tiffany Baker Cox, Deputy Director
Robert Bright, Housing Director
Esperanza Soriano, Communications Director
Gloria Williams, Assistant Counsel
Lisa Lancaster, Executive Director's Assistant

Guests:

Roy Rogers
Linda Reed
Thierno Bah

Call to Order & Invocation

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Roll call was taken. Commissioner Starling offered the invocation.

Minutes & Roll Call

The minutes of the March 23, 2007 board meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Cocke noted that he was present at the meeting and it was noted that the minutes would be corrected. Commissioner Hakeem made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Davis seconded the motion.

Executive Director's Report

Acting Executive Director, Shay Rose, updated the board on the Indian Mascot bill. She noted that the Commission has requested an Attorney General's Opinion on the bill and that a response should be forthcoming. The Legislature passed the bill despite the efforts

of the Commission. Commissioner Starling commended the efforts of Ms. Rose and the Commission on behalf of the Indian population of Tennessee.

Ms. Rose introduced Esperanza Soriano who joined the staff as Communications Director and Tiffany Baker Cox, Deputy Director. Also Gloria Williams, Assistant Counsel. They were each welcomed by the board.

Commissioner Cocke made a motion to accept the report and Commissioner Starling seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed.

Executive Director Appointment Discussion

Chairman Wiggins reported to the board that the front running candidate for the Executive Director's position was Beverly Watts. She has met with the Deputy Governor, Stuart Brunson and also with the Chairman and Commissioner Starling. It was recommended that she be appointed as Executive Director and begin her employment on July 1, 2007.

Commissioner Osborne, Commissioner Starling, Acting Director Rose and Chairman Wiggins spoke on her behalf, noting that she brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the table and is more than qualified to lead the agency.

Commissioner Hakeem made a motion to appoint Beverly Watts to the position of Executive Director. Commissioner Osborne seconded the motion.

Chairman Wiggins read the public necessity statement. "Because a physical quorum of Commissioners was not present at the announced site of the meeting, the Commission determined that a necessity existed for a quorum of members to participate by means of teleconferencing, pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated Section 8-44-108 (b)(2). The determination of necessity was made because the Commission needed to conduct a vote regarding the nomination of an Executive Director for the agency".

A roll call vote was taken: Blalock-yes; Cocke-yes; Davis-yes; Hakeem-yes; Jones-yes; Osborne-yes; Rogers-yes; Starling-yes; Walker-yes; Wiggins-yes. Chairman Wiggins noted that he would contact the Governor's Office and Ms. Watts and notify her of the decision of the Commission.

Employment Case Report

Deputy Director, Tiffany Baker Cox reported that since March 15, 2007 103 complaints have been received. Closed cases consist of 51 no cause, 18 administrative closures, 3 withdrawals and 5 settlements resulting in \$53,365 in benefits.

Deputy Cox also noted that Mr. Lorenzo Benson, an investigator in the Chattanooga office, will retire in June.

Commissioner Davis made a motion to accept the report and Commissioner Hakeem seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed.

Housing Case Report

Housing Director, Robert Bright, reported that since March 2007, 16 new charges have been received and 12 cases have been closed. He also noted that the fiscal year for HUD ends on June 30, 2007 and that we are on target to close the required number of cases for the workshare agreement.

Legal Report

Gloria Williams, Assistant Counsel, reported on the three employment and sixteen housing cases that are currently being worked by the legal division. Some are being docketed for hearings, housing cases are being conciliated and others are in the process of discovery.

Commissioner Osborne made a motion to accept the legal report and Commissioner Davis seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed.

Outreach and Education

Esperanza Soriano, Communications Director, reported to the board that in the near future she would be including a Civil Rights Timeline on the THRC website. Future plans also include partnering with city officials and Public Housing officials in the city of Franklin about some future educational events, continuing the relationship with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, continue to assist victims of Hurricane Katrina with housing issues, the development of a speakers bureau on the THRC website and possible advertising in movie theaters and on billboards as well as continuing the radio spots with Commissioners.

Commissioner Cocke made a motion to accept the Communications report. Commissioner Starling seconded the motion. A vote was taken and passed.

At this time the board went into closed session to discuss legal complaints filed against the Commission.

Commissioner Cocke noted that the April 10, 2007, Board minutes had not been reviewed and approved. Commissioner Hakeem made a motion to accept the minutes of the April 10, 2007 meeting and Commissioner Starling seconded the motion.

Commissioner Farewell

Chairman Wiggins presented Commissioner Rogers a clock to commemorate her time on the Board and thanked her for the many years of service to the citizen's of Tennessee. Commissioner Rogers thanked the Commission for accepting a kindergarten teacher to do such an important job and noted that she would miss everyone.

With no further business to address, Chairman Wiggins adjourned the meeting at 10:20 a.m.